

# Min combines Korean landscape with Western style

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## CULTURE



Artist Min Joung-ki poses for a photo in front of his 2019 painting "Mt. Inwang" at the Kukje Gallery in downtown Seoul.

Courtesy of Kukje Gallery

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Artist Min Joung-ki, 69, spent over four decades of his life painting landscapes and figures. He was recently brought into the spotlight when his work "Mt. Bukhan" appeared as a backdrop for the historic commemorative photo of North Korean leader Kim Jong-un and South Korean President Moon Jae-in shaking hands during the Inter-Korean summit in April 2018.

An exhibition at the Kukje Gallery in central Seoul sheds light on the artist who captures everyday landscapes from a sociopolitical perspective.

Min is often dubbed as a pioneer of Minjung art, a pro-democracy and populist art movement prevalent in Korea in the 1980s, but the artist has refused to be ruled by narrow definitions.

He was born and raised in Seoul, but moved to Yangpyeong, Gyeonggi Province in 1987, and it was around this time his main subject shifted to natural landscapes. In the

early 1980s, he was better known for interpreting so-called "barbershop paintings," a term used for common kitsch artworks popular in small shops and homes.

His landscape paintings are unique, combining realistic and Korean traditional true-view landscape styles. Min rejects drawing in a conventional perspective and his paintings are from multiple points of view.

Min uses oil paints, but employs Korean traditional landscape and map styles to create unique perspectives. Different perspectives and times co-exist in Min's paintings.

"Sooip-ri (Yangpyeong)" (2016) and "Sindanyang Placed on an Ancient Map" (2007) showcase how the artist juxtaposes actual landscape and map-style bird's eye views. "Chongryeompo Gwaneunsong," a 2007 landscape is similar to the famous "Bukhan Mountain" in color and style.

The exhibit is not organized in chronological order and the visitors can jump from the latest works the artist painted just a few days before



"Baeksaehonggung 2" by Min Joung-ki  
Courtesy of the artist and Kukje Gallery

the opening to his earlier works in a more folksy style.

However, it is rather easy to classify the paintings by time. The color scheme is the most noticeable change at first sight.

"His earlier works are mostly in cool blue, green tones, while recent works are in warmer pastel colors," a Kukje Gallery official explained.

While his previous works mostly

features natural landscapes, Min's recent paintings depict more familiar views of Seoul such as "Saiik-dong" and "Segeomjeong." He makes thorough on the ground inspections before actually drawing the scenery based on his memory and photographs.

"Roving Mongyudowon" (2016) is a blend of "Mongyudowondo," a 15th century painting by renowned Joseon painter An Gyeon, and modern-day view of Baam-dong, showing the change of scenery in the same area.

His latest series "Cheongpung Valley" combines actual scenery of the Seochon area, west of Gyeongbok Palace, with a now-demolished French style villa originally built by Korean Empire high ranking official Yoon Deok-young. Min successfully bridged the past and present through his imagination on the background of major mountains of Seoul including Mount Bukak, Bukhan and Inwang.

The exhibition runs through March 3. For more information, visit [www.kukjegallery.com](http://www.kukjegallery.com).